ALTERNATE QUALITY ASSESSMENT SURVEY (AQAS)

The Alternate Quality Assessment Survey (AQAS) is a self-survey document designed to be used by the CMS regional offices and the State agencies for laboratories that perform well to allow these laboratories an extended period between onsite surveys. In order for a laboratory to be eligible to receive the AQAS they must:

- Have been surveyed onsite during the certification period prior to being considered for receipt of the AQAS;
- Have zero or few minor deficiencies cited during the previous certification period;
- Have participated satisfactorily in proficiency testing; i.e., attained a minimum satisfactory score for each analyte, test, subspecialty or specialty for each testing event since the last onsite survey;
- Laboratories performing cytology, histocompatibility and cytogenetics will be surveyed onsite;
- Laboratories with substantiated complaints will be surveyed onsite; and
- No laboratory will receive the AQAS for two consecutive certification cycles.

The AQAS rewards good performing laboratories, provides an educational tool for laboratories to use in preparation for the next onsite CLIA survey and is used as a mechanism to recertify laboratories. The self-survey form is designed to be consistent with the onsite survey process which focuses on a quality assurance approach for evaluating laboratories for compliance with CLIA. This approach reflects the quality assurance requirements of the CLIA regulations which require laboratories to develop, monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of their policies and procedures; identify and correct problems; assure the accurate, reliable and prompt reporting of test results and assure the adequacy and competency of the laboratory staff.